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Thursday, 5 February 1998, 11.10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Oye Mba	(Gabon)
Members:	Bahrain	Mr. Al-Dosari
	Brazil	Mr. Amorim
	China	Mr. Qin Huasun
	Costa Rica	Mr. Sáenz Biolley
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Gambia	Mr. Sallah
	Japan	Mr. Konishi
	Kenya	Mr. Amolo
	Portugal	Mr. Soares
	Russian Federation	Mr. Fedotov
	Slovenia	Mr. Türk
	Sweden	Mr. Dahlgren
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Gomersall
	United States of America	Ms. Soderberg

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 1136 (1997) concerning the situation in the Central African Republic (S/1998/61)

98-85057 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the retiring President

The President (*interpretation from French*): As this is the first meeting of the Security Council for the month of February, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to Mr. Alain Dejammet, Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, for his service as President of the Security Council for the month of January. I am sure I speak for all members of the Security Council in expressing my sincere appreciation to Ambassador Dejammet for the great diplomatic skill with which he guided the work of the Council last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 1136 (1997) concerning the situation in the Central African Republic (S/1998/61)

The President (*interpretation from French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 1136 (1997) concerning the situation in the Central African Republic, document S/1998/61.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/1998/102, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to the following other documents: S/1998/86, letter dated 30 January 1998 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council; S/1998/88, letter dated 28 January 1998 from the President of the Central African Republic addressed to the President of the Security Council; and S/1998/97, letter dated 4 February 1998 from the President of the Republic of Gabon addressed to the President of the Security Council.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I shall first give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Dejammet (France) (*interpretation from French*): I am of course very grateful, Mr. President, for the kind words that you addressed to my country. Allow me to also tell you how honoured we feel to be meeting today under your presidency, as you are the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Gabon, an African State whose very practical, imaginative and energetic diplomacy forms an integral part of the constant quest for peace and security in Africa and throughout the world, thus providing a vibrant example of the manner in which we should all endeavour to serve the principles of the Charter.

After the many troubles faced by the Central African Republic, the Bangui Agreements of January 1997 established a process for peace and national reconciliation. The Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) has supported this process. France pays tribute to the action taken by the President of the Gabonese Republic, Mr. Bongo, Chairman of the International Mediation Committee. He has constantly striven to ensure respect for the Bangui Agreements. We also pay tribute to efforts made by the States that have contributed troops to MISAB: Burkina Faso, Gabon, Mali, Chad, Senegal and Togo.

Finally, we also commend the Secretariat, which has tirelessly supported MISAB's activities. That Mission is a quite remarkable example of preventive diplomacy, which is the very objective of much United Nations effort to prevent conflict and the deterioration of situations that threaten regional or international security and stability. It is thanks to MISAB that significant progress has been achieved.

The situation in the Central African Republic remains precarious nonetheless and continues to threaten stability and security in the region. Persistent efforts must therefore be pursued in support of national reconciliation in the Central African Republic. Indeed, it is necessary to prepare for the forthcoming legislative elections in September, to restructure the security forces and to implement vigorous measures in the economic and social

spheres. These activities can be undertaken only if security is preserved and safeguarded by a peacekeeping operation.

The Secretary-General has made recommendations for a possible follow-up to MISAB. These recommendations provide, *inter alia*, for the establishment of a peacekeeping operation.

France supports the Secretary-General's recommendations. That is why it will vote today in favour of the draft resolution before the Council. This draft resolution will, in effect, allow the Secretariat to prepare operational proposals on which the Security Council will decide on 16 March. We are confident that, in response to the expectations of Africa, you, Sir, and the Secretary-General, the Council's decision at that time will be unanimous and positive. We feel certain that it will also be so today.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of the Central African Republic, in which she requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Kpongo (Central African Republic) took a seat at the Council table.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Chinese delegation warmly welcomes you, Sir, the Foreign Minister of Gabon, as you preside over today's meeting of the Security Council.

China endorses the extension of the mandate of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) in support of the International Mediation Committee's efforts to help the Government of the Central African Republic and all sides concerned resolve the crisis in that country. The Chinese delegation will therefore vote in favour of the draft resolution before us.

As a true friend of Africa, China has always been very concerned by developments in the situation in the Central African Republic. We are deeply disturbed by the sustained unrest brought about by the political and military crisis in that country. We wish to express our concern and sympathy for the people in their suffering. China sincerely hopes that the Central African Republic can resolve the crisis as soon as possible and that its people will soon be able to enjoy a secure and prosperous life.

We are pleased that all sides concerned in the country have firmly and actively committed themselves to the restoration of peace and stability there. We support the Government of National Union established a year ago. We also welcome the progress made over the past year by all sides concerned in implementing the Bangui Agreements. We believe that, so long as all sides concerned take into account the basic interests of the people while treating each with sincerity and proceeding with determination, perseverance and confidence in a spirit of reconciliation, they can certainly overcome their difficulties and differences in order to implement fully all the tasks laid down in the Bangui Agreements and to achieve national reconciliation, peace and prosperity for the people.

In order to help the Central African Republic resolve the crisis and achieve reconciliation, the African countries — especially those of Central Africa — have risen above their own difficulties and made tremendous contributions. In this regard, we highly appreciate the critical role played by MISAB, led by President Bongo.

China has always encouraged and supported the African countries in their efforts to rely on their own strengths in resolving their regional problems. We hope that all sides concerned in the Central African Republic will cooperate closely with MISAB so as to bring those regional efforts to fruition as soon as possible. At the same time, we view with favour the Secretary-General's proposal to deploy peacekeeping forces.

China has always held that the international community should attach importance to African issues in active support of the efforts of African countries to resolve their own crises and to achieve regional peace and stability. We hope that all sides concerned will respond to the appeals of the Governments of Africa and the Secretary-General to provide active assistance on behalf of peace and reconstruction in the Central African Republic. China will continue to make its own efforts.

Mr. Konishi (Japan): At the outset, Mr. President, let me also welcome your presence on this important occasion.

Last August, in order to prevent a resurgence of the conflict in the Central African Republic, the Security Council made the political decision to authorize the Member States participating in the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB), and those States providing logistical support, to ensure the security and freedom of movement of their personnel. My delegation would like to express its sincere appreciation to all involved, including those who took part in the activities of MISAB, the International Monitoring Committee and France, which provided much needed support for those activities. I would also like to pay special tribute to President Bongo of Gabon in his capacity as Chairman of the International Mediation Committee, who has played an indispensable role.

Japan has been engaged in the effort to devise an effective strategy for the prevention and early resolution of conflicts in Africa and to explore just what role the Security Council can play in such a strategy. As a member of the Council since last year, Japan has taken a keen and active interest in the Council's deliberations on this issue. In the light of these efforts, my delegation is of the view that the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic should be considered a part of this strategy. It recognizes that while there is relative stability on the ground, thanks to the excellent work of MISAB, a continued international presence will be essential once MISAB's mandate expires. For these reasons, my delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us, including its intention that the Council take a decision by 16 March on the establishment of a peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic. I also consider that extending the authorization of MISAB until 16 March will give President Patassé the time to make good his promise to implement the Bangui Agreements.

I would like to reiterate that it is extremely important that President Patassé, as the Head of the Administration, fulfil his commitment and responsibility to the people of the Central African Republic, in particular the soldiers and officials of the Government. This is indeed the prerequisite for true and lasting peace and stability in the country. There are many difficulties to be overcome, including the restructuring of security forces and the adoption of the new electoral code. My delegation looks forward to the Secretary-General's report, to be submitted later this month, describing the progress made in these areas, as well as the details regarding the peacekeeping operation to be established. In the meantime, Japan, for its part, will continue to assist the Central African Republic in its effort to restore stability and achieve greater prosperity.

Mr. Amorim (Brazil) (*interpretation from French*): At the outset, Mr. President, I should like to say that we are greatly honoured to see you, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Gabon, presiding over the Security Council. Your presence among us ensures that our work will be conducted wisely and effectively. I also want to express my best wishes to Ambassador Dangue Réwaka, who will be guiding us this month. I should also like to pay tribute to Ambassador Alain Dejammet for his effective presidency of the Council in the month of January.

Since the adoption of resolution 1136 (1997), there have been favourable developments in the situation in the Central African Republic. We note, for example, the letter of President Patassé, contained in the latest report of the Secretary-General, which represents an important step in the right direction. We also want to stress the crucial role played by President Omar Bongo in the peace process.

However, despite all of the efforts undertaken by the signatories of the Bangui Agreements, and in particular those of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB), whose neutral and impartial contribution deserves our full recognition, there are elements that are not necessarily favourable to the peace process. The fact that the leaders of the Groupe des onze partis politiques de l'opposition (Group of Eleven) and the four groups of affiliated trade unions have decided to withdraw from the preparatory committee for the conference is a new cause of concern.

The draft resolution under consideration, which we support, would extend the authorization for the operation of MISAB until 16 March. Furthermore, the Council supports the intention of the Secretary-General to appoint a special representative for the Central African Republic and encourages the Secretary-General to proceed with this appointment without delay. We are convinced that a special representative will be able to make a significant contribution to the peace process.

With regard to the establishment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation, the draft resolution provides that a decision be taken by 16 March on the basis of the report that the Secretary-General is to submit by 23 February. This report should contain a proposal

regarding the structure, goals and financial implications of establishing a peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic.

Of course, the primary responsibility for the peace process remains with the various political actors in the Central African Republic. In that context, President Patassé has a central role to play. I am sure that, in the light of actual developments on the ground, the international community will be prepared to play its part in the process of reconciliation and national reconstruction in the Central African Republic.

Mr. Al-Dosari (Bahrain) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report; to the International Mediation Committee, under the chairmanship of President El Hadj Omar Bongo of Gabon; to the Chairman and members of the International Monitoring Committee; to the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB); and to the countries concerned.

We should also like to extend our gratitude to the United Nations Development Programme and all the United Nations agencies and programmes that are making efforts in the Central African Republic to achieve lasting peace, stability and national reconciliation in that country.

My delegation shares the concern expressed by the Secretary-General, in paragraph 24 of his report, regarding the fragility of the progress made in improving the situation of the Central African Republic. My delegation therefore requests the urgent implementation of all the Bangui Agreements, which will of course require a commitment by all the parties to their implementation.

My delegation also calls for continued support by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), by other specialized agencies of the United Nations and by Member States for the Central African Republic and for security and stability there. We reiterate how important it is to ensure the security and political stability of the Central African Republic.

For these reasons we shall vote in favour of the draft resolution before the Security Council, convinced as we are that it will support the peace process in the Central African Republic.

It is not possible to foretell the situation that will follow the withdrawal of the African troops, and we must therefore give serious consideration to establishing a United Nations peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic. We support this, and look forward to the report of the Secretary-General on the details of the establishment of such an operation, as requested in paragraph 11 of the draft resolution before us. This would have a positive effect and would strengthen security and stability in the Central African Republic.

Mr. Amolo (Kenya): The delegation of Kenya is pleased to see you, Sir, the Foreign Minister of the Gabonese Republic, presiding over the work of the Security Council today, when the Council is discussing an issue of great importance to Africa. As an African country that has employed regional initiatives to resolve some of its political and security problems, Kenya is proud of the impressive leadership role played by President Bongo of Gabon — and indeed by the whole nation of Gabon — in the situation prevailing in the Central African Republic. We also wish to pay tribute to all the countries currently involved in ensuring that relative stability continues in the Central African Republic. In that regard, the contribution made by the Government of France is particularly laudable. Finally, we commend the Secretariat for its continued focused cooperation with regard to the valiant efforts of those nations.

The Secretary-General's report of 23 January 1998 gives a clear picture of the current situation in Bangui and an indication of the shape of our future involvement in that country. We support his efforts and welcome his recommendations. We in Kenya are painfully aware of the fragility of the current situation and its implications for regional stability and international peace and security. The Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) has without doubt done an exemplary job under very difficult circumstances, and we are encouraged that it is willing to continue to assist the Central African Republic in consolidating what is still a fragile peace. We are also happy to note that the long-expected National Reconciliation Conference, with the participation of all political groupings, has been scheduled for the week of 23 to 28 February 1998. We think that this is an important step in bringing together the people of the Central African Republic, who are tired of conflict.

However, the anticipated withdrawal by mid-April 1998 of French logistic and financial support, on which MISAB is fully dependent, would disrupt MISAB's operations and would undoubtedly reverse the progress so

far achieved and destabilize the fragile peace in the country. It is precisely for those reasons that we are in agreement with the conclusion set out in the Secretary-General's report that

> "Bold and far-reaching measures have therefore to be taken without further delay to redress the current situation in the Central African Republic". [S/1998/61, para. 24]

My delegation considers that the draft resolution before us seeks to address these concerns by extending MISAB's mandate until 16 March 1998 and that it expresses the Council's intention to take a decision on the establishment of a peacekeeping operation that would be critical in moving the peace process in the Central African Republic forward. Kenya will therefore vote in favour of the draft resolution.

In conclusion, we would like to put on record the warm appreciation of all the African delegations in the Security Council for the excellent spirit of cooperation and goodwill that was clearly demonstrated by all delegations during our discussions on the draft resolution. It is our fervent hope that this spirit will be extended to our continued appeals for contributions to the Trust Fund established for the Central African Republic.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the representative of Kenya for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Soares (Portugal) (*interpretation from French*): I wish first of all, Sir, to express my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you presiding over this meeting of the Security Council. Your presence is logical not only because Gabon holds the presidency of the Council for this month, but also as a reflection of the role that your country, your President and you yourself have played in the resolute search for a solution to the problems of the Central African Republic.

(*spoke in English*)

The Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) in the Central African Republic is a good example of what Africa can do to prevent conflicts and to stabilize crises. The activities of MISAB, however, require complementary support from the international community. In this regard we commend France for the vital assistance it has been providing thus far. But the United Nations will have to consider soon how best to capitalize on these efforts so as not to jeopardize the success so far achieved.

Portugal would like again to pay tribute to the African mediation initiative and to the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and to reaffirm its support for the International Monitoring Committee and for MISAB and its troop-contributing States — Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon and Mali — in their very important role in the ongoing process of national reconciliation in that country. In that same context, we would like to praise the efforts of the Chairman of the International Monitoring Committee and of President Bongo of Gabon, who have been playing an important role in the resolution of the crisis and in the monitoring of the implementation of the Bangui Agreements. As I said before, Mr. President, your presence here today is a reflection of the important role played by your country in this process.

The situation in the Central African Republic remains precarious. The disruption of the current volatile security, social and economic conditions would have serious repercussions for the region as a whole. Therefore, Portugal welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendations regarding the concepts for a future United Nations presence after the withdrawal of MISAB forces on 16 March. We agree in general terms with the Secretary-General's evaluation of the still-fragile peace process and the international environment in that subregion of Africa. We also share the view expressed in the Secretary-General's report that the parties concerned should fulfil, as soon as possible, all the provisions of the Bangui Agreements, and that substantial reform should be undertaken to revitalize the country's economy and to improve the living conditions of the population.

Given the progress already achieved, which should not be compromised, as well as the enormous tasks that lie ahead for the full implementation of the Bangui Agreements and long-term stability in the Central African Republic, Portugal agrees that there is a need to establish a peacekeeping operation in that country as a major preventive measure, as referred to by the Secretary-General. In this context, Portugal supports the draft resolution before us today.

Mr. Sallah (Gambia): Allow me, Sir, to express my heartfelt gratitude at seeing you, as Foreign Minister of Gabon, chairing and addressing this formal meeting of the Security Council. My delegation feels honoured by your presence here. It is a fitting occasion, since we are

dealing with the issue of the Central African Republic, in which the Gabonese Republic is playing a leading role.

Once again, I wish to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his very informative report on the Central African Republic. Our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude go to the Republic of France and to the member countries of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB), as well as to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), whose very vital and timely intervention in the crisis in the Central African Republic contributed immensely to the restoration of peace and tranquillity in that country.

The Bangui Agreements constitute the foundation of the peace process in the Central African Republic, and the authorities concerned, with the participation of MISAB and other international agencies, are taking giant steps towards the successful implementation of these provisions. However, the task of meeting the financial obligations vis-à-vis a very sensitive sector of the population of the Central African Republic will certainly require the rapid intervention of the international community in order to prevent the emergence of social unrest and general insecurity. This would negate the whole peace process and might return the situation back to square one. Therefore, my delegation urges the donor agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions to come forward and offer financial support to the operations in Bangui.

As a result of the effective intervention and continued presence of MISAB in the Central African Republic, relative peace and security reign in Bangui, but it is evident that this state of affairs is very fragile, for the smouldering embers of violence are yet to be completely extinguished. Now and again, they manifest their existence through various forms of retrogressive activities in the country. Thus, with the imminent withdrawal of the French troops and the eventual expiration of the mandate of MISAB, a vacuum could be created that could make things fall apart, thereby leading to the return of general chaos and insecurity in the country. Such a precarious situation could also threaten peace and stability in the whole region.

In this regard, the maintenance of a credible peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic will be a decisive step in the right direction in safeguarding the Bangui peace process and allowing stability to be firmly rooted in the country. Such a mission could be very instrumental in creating an atmosphere conducive to the holding of legislative and presidential elections.

It would be inconceivable to abandon the Central African Republic in the middle of the Rubicon, thereby rendering futile all the laudable efforts that have been exerted so far in the restoration of a credible peace and security in that country. Thus we add our voice to that of President Patassé in requesting that the United Nations consider positively establishing a peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic in order to ensure that there is no gap in the continued presence of peace and stability in that country, for the slightest vacuum in this regard could result in the country, or even the region, falling back into the conflict situation that we have worked so hard to prevent.

The clarion call made by the Gabonese delegation to the international community to come to the rescue of the Central African Republic in particular, and Africa in general, at this crucial moment is worth reiterating. Thus my delegation supports the extension of MISAB until it is replaced by a United Nations peacekeeping force, as stated in paragraph 33 of the report of the Secretary-General.

The Gambia supports the draft resolution before us, and we will vote in favour of it.

Mr. Dahlgren (Sweden): The International Monitoring Committee and the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) are playing an important role in facilitating a return to peace and security in the Central African Republic. Today, we wish to express our particular appreciation to all those involved in these efforts — to the Chairman of the International Mediation Committee, President Bongo, to its members, to the troop contributors and other contributors to MISAB, and to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Progress has been achieved over the past year in implementing the Bangui Agreements. We hope that concerted efforts will now be made to implement the outstanding provisions, as set out in the letter dated 8 January 1998 from the President of the Central African Republic to the Secretary-General. Sweden supports the extension of the Security Council's authorization to MISAB until mid-March.

We also see the need for a continued international presence in the Central African Republic after the end of MISAB's mandate. The United Nations is responsible for international peace and security. We therefore support the proposal that the follow-up to MISAB take the form of a

United Nations operation. We look forward to the detailed concept of operations which the Secretary-General intends to submit to the Security Council.

We attach particular importance to the preventive and multifunctional aspect of the envisaged United Nations operation. The military and civilian components of that mission will need to pull together in close cooperation with United Nations agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions.

Sweden will vote in favour of the draft resolution before the Council today.

Mr. Türk (Slovenia): We are honoured to have you, Sir, the Foreign Minister of Gabon, in the presidency of the Security Council on this important occasion. Our best wishes are also addressed to the Permanent Representative of Gabon, the President of the Security Council for this month. We are convinced that his leadership of the Security Council will be effective and successful. We would also like to take this occasion to express our appreciation to Ambassador Alain Dejammet of France for his effective leadership as President of the Security Council for the month of January.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General for the detailed report concerning the situation in the Central African Republic and also for the report of the International Committee for the Follow-up of the Bangui Agreements. We would like in particular, Sir, to express our admiration for the President of your country, Mr. Omar Bongo, and for his efforts to establish peace and normalcy in the Central African Republic.

We note with appreciation, from the reports that were received by the Security Council recently, the positive role of the Inter-African Force to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB). Its efforts have resulted in the gradual restoration of peace and security to Bangui since the signing of the Bangui Agreements. We also note with satisfaction the third report of the Member States participating in MISAB and the efforts for the implementation of the Bangui Agreements referred to in that report.

The situation in the Central African Republic and the peace process are still very fragile. Therefore we are encouraged by the willingness of the States participating in MISAB and the Central African Republic to extend MISAB's mandate in order to complete its mission, assuming that the United Nations peacekeeping operation established after that will follow.

We attach the highest importance to the expeditious implementation of the outstanding provisions of the Bangui Agreements. In that connection, we recognize the support provided by the United Nations Development Programme, and we encourage it to continue with its efforts.

The commitments to the implementation of the provisions of the Bangui Agreements expressed by Mr. Patassé, President of the Central African Republic, in his letter to Secretary-General of 8 January 1998, are essential and ought to be fulfilled expeditiously.

Slovenia also believes that further support by the international community is necessary. We thus attach the highest importance to the extension of MISAB until 16 March 1998 with the prospect of the peacekeeping operation to be established by United Nations. We support proposals to that effect made by the Secretary-General.

The political will of the international community and the efforts of the affected country itself are essential for the construction of stable peace and security, as well as for the successful implementation of the structural-adjustment programme.

Hence, we are encouraged by the fact that all political parties in the Central African Republic have expressed their intention to participate in the National Reconciliation Conference in Bangui from 23 to 28 February 1998.

In conclusion, I wish to express the Slovenian delegation's satisfaction that the draft resolution submitted for action by the Security Council today addresses all the relevant issues of the situation in the Central African Republic at this stage. We congratulate the group of African States which, under the leadership of Kenya, prepared the draft resolution. We shall vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. Gomersall (United Kingdom) (*interpretation from French*): My delegation welcomes your presence here, Mr. President, and the effective and amicable presidency your delegation is sure to provide this month.

The United Kingdom would first like to commend the great efforts of President Bongo of Gabon, as

Chairman of the International Mediation Committee, to achieve lasting peace in the Central African Republic.

The United Kingdom pays tribute to the efforts of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreement (MISAB), which continues to play an essential role in maintaining peace in the Central African Republic. We also hail the efforts of the African troop-contributing countries and the role played by France in its logistical support of MISAB.

(*spoke in English*)

The United Kingdom notes the Secretary-General's recommendation that a United Nations operation should take over the role of MISAB subject to certain conditions and his request that the Security Council should agree in principle to this proposal. The United Kingdom will certainly give this request its positive consideration.

We also support the Secretary-General's recommendation that the deployment of a United Nations operation should be made conditional on the Government of the Central African Republic addressing the need for fundamental adjustments in its social, economic, financial and security policies. We welcome the Secretary-General's intention to establish a United Nations political office in Bangui to monitor the Republic's progress in the implementation of these reforms.

For these reasons, my delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us.

Mr. Fedotov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from French*): Our delegation is pleased to have this opportunity to see you, Sir, presiding over this meeting of the Security Council on the question of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreement (MISAB). This happy occasion is especially symbolic Mr. Foreign Minister, since your country, and in particular President Omar Bongo, have made and continue to make such a crucial contribution to a political settlement in the Central African Republic.

(*spoke in Russian*)

The Russian delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution to extend the authorization for MISAB until 16 March. We proceed from the premise that international assistance in support of the Bangui Agreements is of great significance for the stabilization of the situation in the Central African Republic. We also note that although progress has undeniably been made in restoring peace and bringing about reconciliation in that country, it is not yet irreversible.

Of great significance for further stabilization is the commitment of all to the Bangui Agreements. It is obvious that the difficult economic and social situation remains a major destabilizing factor. In order to improve that, we must undertake the efforts necessary for economic and social recovery, which would be a sound basis for normalization as a whole.

In principle, we are prepared to take a positive view of the establishment in the Central African Republic of a United Nations peacekeeping operation that is limited in time and in resources. We are prepared to take a further, more specific decision following an additional report from the Secretary-General on the extension of the mandate and the possible peacekeeping operation.

Mr. Sáenz Biolley (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of my delegation, allow me to convey to you, Sir, our sense of satisfaction on seeing you presiding over our work on this occasion. Costa Rica appreciates and pays tribute to the leadership of Gabon, in particular President Omar Bongo, for the promotion of regional agreement on issues affecting international peace and security in central Africa.

On several occasions we have expressed here the importance we attach to the leadership shown by the African countries in achieving appropriate solutions to political and security problems affecting their continent. In that regard, we especially emphasize the role rightly played by the Organization of African Unity and various subregional organs, which are participating actively and creatively in the resolution of conflicts and the maintenance of peace in Africa. We express our appreciation to all of them.

Against this background, the case of the Central African Republic should and deserves to be emphasized, because there the countries of the subregion, in the framework of the International Committee for the Follow-up of the Bangui Agreements, have made a huge and invaluable effort of preventive diplomacy and peace-building. This work, of course, has depended and still depends on the important political and material support of France, which, due to its traditional ties to the region, has made a major effort in support of peace in the Central African Republic.

Peace and security in the Central African Republic are based on the specific features and conditions of the country. As with other conflicts that occur in the developing world, this conflict is rooted in the economic and social difficulties affecting the security of the population. Therefore, from Costa Rica's perspective, an essential condition for the resolution of the problems of the Central African Republic is the ability of the country to overcome the grave economic and social problems affecting the development process. This situation should be urgently addressed by the international community, and we are therefore pleased at the comprehensive approach with which our Organization, through the United Nations Development Programme, supports and backs the International Follow-up Committee. However, in this connection, we are of the view that a new approach should be taken by the Bretton Woods international financial institutions, on a special and exceptional basis, to aid in the economic and social reconstruction of the country.

The work being done by the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) in the Central African Republic is essential for the maintenance of peace and security in the country. In particular, we wish to stress the role it has played in promoting the security of the population. For this reason, we believe that this great effort should continue. My delegation thus supports the draft resolution before us. We feel certain that the continuity of MISAB's presence will be of major importance for the continued implementation of the Bangui Agreements.

We say this while fully recognizing that, undeniably, it is for the Central Africans themselves to put the Agreements into practice. We therefore commend the willingness of President Patassé, as well as of all the political parties, to strive for this goal, in particular as regards support for national reconciliation.

Finally, I wish to state that Costa Rica attaches the greatest importance to the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic in the near future. We shall support this deployment when it is discussed in the Council.

Ms. Soderberg (United States of America): The United States commends the contribution of the President of Gabon, the former President of Mali, other African States and France to the consolidation of peace and security in the Central African Republic. In particular, we welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Gabonese Republic: your presence here today underscores the importance of stability in the Central African Republic.

Through the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB), the international community has re-established security in Bangui, conducted an effective disarmament programme and helped create the conditions necessary for the implementation of the Bangui Agreements. For this reason, the United States fully supports an initial extension of the Chapter VII authorization of MISAB until 16 March. We will vote in favour of this draft resolution.

The United States will be prepared to take a decision on a possible United Nations peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic by 16 March. We will consider whether the process of institutional, political, military and economic reforms in the Central African Republic could be assisted by the security umbrella that a peacekeeping operation could provide. We will study closely the Secretary-General's recommendations regarding the size, the mandate, the cost and the exit strategy of the proposed peacekeeping operation.

We will give equal consideration to the commitment of the parties in the Central African Republic to the implementation of the Bangui Agreements. The international community can assist, but cannot replace, the efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic to achieve long-term stability. To be effective, a peacekeeping operation must be linked to the implementation of fundamental political, economic and security reforms by the Government of the Central African Republic. We urge the Government of the Central African Republic to undertake these reforms without delay.

The United States supports the Secretary-General's intention to appoint a special representative to the Central African Republic. We believe the prompt appointment of a special representative could help the Government of the Central African Republic, United Nations agencies and the international community develop a coordinated transition programme that could resolve the crisis in the Central African Republic and build a more permanent peace. A group of friends of the Central African Republic, comprising interested Governments and organizations, could provide essential support to the special representative's efforts.

The President *(interpretation from French)*: I shall now put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/1998/102.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bahrain, Brazil, China, Costa Rica, France, Gabon, Gambia, Japan, Kenya, Portugal, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President *(interpretation from French)*: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1152 (1998).

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Gabon.

The Council, in adopting this resolution that extends the mandate of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB), has just taken an important decision. The President of the Gabonese Republic, El Hadj Omar Bongo, in his capacity as Chairman of the International Mediation Committee for the crisis in the Central African Republic, has conveyed to the Security Council, in the letter he addressed to its President, the urgent need to take all possible steps to prevent the situation in the Central African Republic from deteriorating once again, for lack of appropriate assistance. I am most gratified that the resolution we have just adopted reflects that concern.

In this regard, I would like to underscore the prominent role played by MISAB in the Central African Republic's political stabilization — though we must realize that it is not yet absolutely assured. I am also pleased to pay tribute here to the sacrifices made by the African countries — Burkina Faso, Senegal, Chad, Togo, Mali and Gabon — that are participating in MISAB. I also pay tribute to the assistance provided by the United Nations Development Programme. And I am also pleased to praise the commitment shown by all of the partners, especially France, whose logistical and financial contribution to MISAB has allowed it to carry out its mandate.

At a time when the composition and the resources of MISAB will be undergoing significant changes due to the announced withdrawal of France, I believe it is reasonable for the international community to demonstrate its solidarity with the Central African people, in particular by the timely deployment of a peacekeeping operation, as rightly recommended by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in his report of 23 January 1998. By taking such a step the Council would be contributing effectively to preventing the resurgence in the Central African Republic of new conflicts, the effects of which would seriously threaten the already fragile peace of the whole Central African subregion.

I cannot conclude my statement without expressing the deep concern of the Government of Gabon at the possibility of any further procrastination by the Security Council regarding the deployment of a peacekeeping operation in Africa.

In the present case, we feel that there is no real justification for such an attitude. It seems to me that all the conditions are in place for a smooth transition from MISAB to any operation to be established in the future. What we must bear in mind is the need to avoid another tragedy brought about by the international community's absence from a crisis situation in Africa.

That is why I must take this opportunity to reiterate the appeal addressed to the Security Council by President Bongo that it complete its task of maintaining and consolidating peace in the Central African Republic.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.